

Winter Meditations :
 OR, A
S E R M O N
 CONCERNING
 Frost and Snow, and Winds, &c.
 AND
The Wonders of GOD therein.

By JOHN SHOWER.



L O N D O N :

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Winter Medications

SERMON

2962:06

BY JOHN SHOWER

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TO THE
Right Honourable
Sir Thomas Lanc,
Lord Mayor

OF THE
City of L O N D O N.

My Lord,

THE Extremity of the Season this Winter, gave Occasion to the Additional Charity to the Poor of the City, which by *His Majesty's* Order was Collected in every Parish, and by your Lordship's Care (with that of the Bishop of *London*) was impartially distributed. As that was very Necessary and Commendable, with respect to the *Bodies* of Men, the same Occasion will allow the following Discourse to be Seasonable, to promote *another* Charity (proper to my Sphere) towards their

A 2 Souls :

The Epistle Dedicatory.

Souls: And in this Regard a more *Extensive* One than the former; as that was meant only for the Poor, this equally concerns the Rich and the Poor too: Which is Apology sufficient for my prefixing your Lordship's Name here; Especially since both of these Vertues are your Ornament. And I am not unwilling to let the World know, That Multitudes in this City, of all Perswasions, do thank God for such Magistrates, who serve the Ends of Religion and Justice in their Respective Offices. This at least may be affirmed of your Lordship, and will be remembred to your Honour; Altho the Providence of God hath made your Year Memorable on a very mournful Account, not as to this City only, but the whole Kingdom, and the best part of Europe; I mean, by the most justly to be Lamented Death of Our Most Gracious QUEEN; Which compell'd the Intelligent World to differ from the Natural, and in the midst of that severe Frost, made so Universal a Thaw, as if England were Dissolving in its own Tears. Doubtless the Best Pens in the Nation will be Employed (besides what of that kind hath been already publish'd with General Acceptation) to recommend Her Bright Example to the Present, and Future Ages. And none who had the Ho-

The Epistle Dedicatory.

Honour to know *Her Majesty*, or will credit Those who had, but must acknowledg a *very Instructive One* may be collected from Her True and Just Character, consider'd either as a *Christian, a Wife, or a Queen.*

There is not the least Reason to imagine, (and 'tis an Act of Justice to my Brethren to declare it) but *the Protestant Dissenters* were as tenderly affected with this Extraordinary Loss, as any Other of *His Majesty's* most Mournful and most Dutiful Subjects. This they generally testified in City and Country, by their Endeavours from the Pulpit, suitably to affect and instruct their Congregations. And herein, in their Narrower Sphere, to concur with the Reverend Conforming Clergy, to the same good End: Being always ready to own and avow their Agreement with them in the Greatest Things, tho in some Lesser they are contrain'd to Differ. And I may further add; That what was so solemnly spoken for us, to our *Sovereign*, by that Reverend Person, to whom we committed that Part, was our Undisguised, Common Sense.

But we may not overlook, that the Wise and Merciful GOD, who orders all the Times and Seasons, might have aggravated our most Deploable

The Epistle Dedicatory.

plorable Loss, by making such a Breach some Years sooner, or at a time when *His Majesty* had been abroad, hazarding his Life at the Head of his Armies ; but he chose to do it when *the King* was here, and his *Parliament* sitting: Whole Loyal Condolance of *the Queen's Death*, and Unanimous Resolution to stand by *His Majesty* against all his Enemies abroad and at home, (accompanied with the like from *This City*,) was such a President to all the Three Kingdoms, as most effectually to shame and silence the Hopes, and Confidence of our Common Enemies.

I shall not presume to say more on a Subject so much above me : but most heartily implore the Blessing of Heaven on your Lordship.

I am, My Lord,

Your Lordship's most Faithful

and Obedient Servant,

JOHN SHOWER.

Winter Meditations :
 O R, A
 S E R M O N
 CONCERNING
Frost, and Snow, and Winds, &c.

Pfalm CXLVII. 15, 16, 17, 18.

He sendeth forth his Commandment on Earth, his Word runneth very swiftly. He giveth Snow like Wool; He scattereth the hoar Frost like Ashes. He casteth forth his Ice like Morsels: Who can stand before his Cold? He sendeth out his Word, and melteth them: He causeth his Wind to blow, and the Waters flow.

THE Egyptians, who were famous for their Knowledge, and communicated the Sciences to many parts of the World, were most ignorant and sottish in their Thoughts of GOD, and as brutish in their Worship of him. They fancied a multitude of particular Gods, as
 B included,

included, and shut up, within the Bodies of *Sheep* and *Oxen*, *Goats* and *Dogs*, &c. and many other more inferiour Creatures, whom therefore they worship'd, to the number of 30000 Gods.

The *Romans* (more polish'd and renown'd for Civil Prudence) were comparatively wiser in their Religious Worship; and for a long time after the Constitutions of *Numa Pompilius* they refused to admit any Images of the Divinity in their Common-wealth; as believing that GOD was every where visible, by some Impressions of Divinity in every Creature, in every Action, in every Event. But by reason of the darkness of a Carnal Mind, and the want of Scripture-Revelation, they became *vain in their Imaginations*, and ran into numberless *Superstitions* unworthy of GOD. That Truth however, of which they had but obscure and imperfect Notices, we may usefully consider, by Reason enlightened from the Holy Scriptures, *viz.* That GOD hath visibly discovered himself in his Works of Nature and common Providence; That in *These* there are some Lineaments and Foot-steps of his *Eternal Power* and *God-head*; That some Syllables of him may be observed, and read in the Book of the Creatures.

And as every thing is beautiful in its Season, this part of his Works, which the *Psalmist* here mentions, is proper for our Contemplation at this time of the Year. The extreme Cold of the Season may assist to warm our Devotion and Reverence towards GOD, while we seriously consider these Works of his Hand, these Wonders of his Goodness, Wisdom, and Power, in giving *Snow like Wool*, and commanding *Frost and Ice*, and by a *Word dissolving it*, &c.

The Title and Conclusion of this Psalm, *Hallelujah*, (with which this and some that follow, do both begin and end,) is a Call and Exhortation to celebrate the high Praises of GOD. Several of the Ancient Writers of the Church suppose the time of the penning of it, to have been after the *Jews* return from the *Babylonish Captivity*, and the rebuilding of *Jerusalem*; and on that Account, some ascribe it (though there be no such Inscription in the Hebrew) to the Prophet *Haggai*, or *Zachariah*; others rather unto *Nehemiah*, who built the Walls and set up the Gates of *Jerusalem*. 'Tis
certain

certain, that the *Jews* lamented their *Captivity*, and the Ruin of their Country, by one Psalm or Hymn, viz. CXXXVII. and 'tis not unlikely that they should endeavour to preserve the Memory of their *Restoration*, and in as publick a manner acknowledge the *Providence* of God. And there are many Expressions in this *Psalm*, which favour the supposition, That it was design'd and done in this.

The whole is an *Invitation* to praise God; and two sorts of Arguments are employ'd to press it; such as are taken from his general Goodness and Bounty to all the World, and such as relate to his special Favour and Kindness to his People. So were the *Jews* in a peculiar manner under the Names of *Sion* and *Jerusalem*. Their Temporal Blessings and their Privileges, as to Religion, are both mentioned. As to the former sort, you have the four principal parts of a People's Prosperity, viz. Strength of Places, multitude of Inhabitants, Civil Peace, and plentiful Provisions. Praise the Lord, O *Jerusalem*! Praise thy God, O *Sion*! who hath strengthened the Barrs of thy Gates, and blessed thy Children within thee, and made Peace within thy Borders; and filleth thee with the fat, or finest of the *Wheat*, ver. 12, 13, 14. i. e. ' Praise him, who hath re-built and fortified this City, which a little while since was without Barrs or Gates; who hath blessed thy Children, or encreased the number of thy Citizens; and after a tedious Oppression hath given Peace, and thereby restored Plenty; that the Husband man is no longer disturbed in his Labour, or the Earth hindred from yielding her Encrease and Fruit.

' This hath God done for us, saith the *Psalmist*, by the same Almighty, Sovereign Power, which continually shews it self in the World, in every season of the Year. For when he sends forth his Commandment on the Earth, his Word runneth very swiftly. He hath done it powerfully, by a word of Command; and swiftly too, for he but speaks the Word, and it is done. Astonishing Power indeed! that after an hard Winter, when by every thing almost on the Earth seem'd to be kill'd, he can give a plentiful Harvest, and a fruitful Season. 'Tis he hath done this, who gives Snow like Wool, that descends silently, and lyes upon the Ground like a Fleece of Wool; so that no Sheep

'is more warmly clad with Wool, than the Earth by great
 'Snows. At other times he gently scatters his hoary Frost like
 'Albes. 'Tis He, who in a Winter-Season, casteth forth his
 'Ice like Morsels, that a multitude of small pieces of Ice may
 'be seen upon the Earth, like Morsels of Bread, without
 'any appearance of Water, or moisture in them. And
 'this he sometimes accompanies with such extremity of
 'Cold, as none can resist the force of it, or long support it.
 'Neither Man, nor Beast on Earth, nor the Fishes in the
 'Ponds and Rivers, are long able to endure it. *Who can*
 'stand before his Cold? On the other hand, his Power is as
 'great in the sudden change of the Weather. *He sendeth*
 'out his Word, and melteth them, i. e. *These Morsels of Ice:*
 'He causeth his Wind to blow, and the Snow and Ice is dis-
 'solv'd, and the Waters flow again. i. e. He causeth a sudden
 'Thaw by the warm Breath of softer Winds, that the Wa-
 'ters come down in full Streams on the Valleys.

By these things the Power and Providence of GOD is
 made known to the *World*; but 'tis the peculiar Privilege
 of his People, that he discovers himself to them in another
 and better manner. As it follows in the close of the *Psalms*,
 v. 19, 20. *He hath shewed his Word unto Jacob, his Statutes and*
his Judgments unto Israel: He hath not dealt so with every Na-
tion; as for his Judgments they have not known them.

Other People might receive Showres and Snow out of the
 Clouds, but not the Laws and Commandments of God, as
 the *Jews* did upon Mount Sinai. He hath another Method
 of instructing *Jerusalem* and *Sion*; not by Frost and Snow,
 and Ice only: and the divine word of Power and Wisdom
 that causeth Them; but by his Statutes and Judgments, which
 in a glorious manner he delivered to 'em from Heaven.
 Such a Revelation of his Will, no other Nation was to be
 favoured with besides the *Jews*, until the *Messias* promised
 to all Nations as well as to them. should come, and break
 down the partition Wall. For all which Blessings, Praise
 the Lord, O *Jerusalem*! Praise thy God, O *Sion*!

In speaking to the Text I have read, I shall endeavour
 two things; First, To show how these Works of GOD here
 mentioned do objectively Praise him; or bear Testimony to
 his

his Being and Perfections. Secondly, That *We* ought to Praise and Acknowledg *G O D*, and give Glory to him, on the Account of *these his VVorks*. And as the Application and Improvement of the former, I shall direct you, in some Instances, how to do so.

First, These VVorks of *G O D*, (which the *WWinter-Season* especially calls us to contemplate, such as *Frost and Snow*, and *Ice*, and *Cold*,) do *objectively* Praise him : They bear Testimony to the Existence of a *G O D*, as the Author of them, and to several of the Divine Perfections. He challengeth a Propriety in these things, as *his Works*. He forms all the Meteors at first, as well as gives them their Commission afterward. Among all the mighty Monarchs of the Earth, there is none can condense the Waters, or congeal them ; can command the Frost or Snow to be on the Earth, or to be dissolv'd. But by *his Breath* the Frost is given, and the *Job XXXVII. breadth of the Waters straitned*. He saith to the Snow, be thou *ver. 6. 10.* on the Earth ; likewise to the small Rain, and to the great Rain of *his strength*. The Waters are dried up by the command of his Word, and they *flow* again by his Order. He *sealeth up the Hand of every Man*, by an extream Frost, he *bindeth their Hands from working*, (in the Fields especially, and as to several Trades,) that all Men may know *his VVork*. At such a Season they have Leisure and Opportunity to consider it more seriously ; when by reason of the Frost, the *WWaters are hid as with a Stone* ; that is, with Ice as hard as a Stone. And the face of the deep is frozen : Not only little Ponds and Rivulets, but great Rivers, and sometimes an Arm of the Sea. And then 'tis his Prerogative, to make the Waters flow, and the Rivers return to their wonted Course. *Job XXXVIII. ver. 30.*

These and all other Creatures are *his Servants*, by whom he is punctually obeyed. *VVhatsoever he pleaseth, that doth he*, *119 Psalm.* in Heaven and Earth, and Air and Sea, and all deep Places. *91.* The Clouds are *his Chariot*, wherein he rides in the visible Demonstrations of his glorious Power, Wisdom, and Goodness. *135 Psalm.* The thick Clouds of the Skie are said to be *his Pavilion*, as *5.* if he resided there as a General, to command the Winds *104 Psalm.* and Meteors, and give out their several Commissions. *3.* They are all turned about, and disposed of, by *his Counsel* ; to *18 Psalm. 11.* *Job xxxvii.* *11, 12.* do

do whatsoever he commands them, upon the Face of the World in the Earth. And by watering he wears the thick Cloud; That is, He sends 'em to remote places to empty themselves, till they can give down no more: By this watering he is said to wear the Clouds; speaking after the manner of Men, who are wearied with long Journeys.

Isa. xl. 12.

How solemnly doth God challenge this to be his Right, as Creator and Original of all things? *My hand*, saith he, *bath laid the Foundations of the Earth, and my Right Hand bath meted out the Heavens as a span: and when I call* (unto all, or any of them,) *they stand up together*, as Servants in a posture of Readiness to observe my Direction, and do my Pleasure. And no wonder if they all observe his orders, when it was his word brought 'em into being. *He is the Father of the Rain: He begetteth the Drops of Dew: He owns all the Treasures of Snow: He holds all the Winds in his Fist.* He needs but open his hand, to let it blow from any Quarter he pleaseth. There is not a breath of Wind can stir, to bind up the Waters, or melt 'em, but as he appoints. He is said to *walk, to ride, to fly* upon the Wings of the Wind. Some of the Heathens had such a sense of the Necessity of God's Governing the Winds, that they devised a God on purpose, (*Æolus*) whom they feign'd to have the Care and Dominion of 'em. The like may be said of all the other Meteors.

Psal. civ. 3.
cvii. 27.
cxlviii. 8.

We may Consider more particularly, how the Glory of God appears in these his ordinary works, how they show forth his Praise. *First*, as to the Nature and Causes of them. *Secondly*, The wonderful Variety of them. *Thirdly*, Their Regular Succession in their proper seasons. *Fourthly*, Their Absolute Intire Subjection to the disposal of God. *Lastly*, The many Excellent Purposes for which they serve, as thus manag'd, and directed by his Sovereign will, and Wisdom.

I. If we look into their Nature and Original, it will soon be found they are the works of GOD, and can have no other Parent or First cause to produce 'em. We understand but little of the nature of Heat and Cold, Dryness and Moisture, and how skilfully they are mix'd, and temper'd together; of how small parts the Meteors in the Air consist, and how they are united: how the Vapours are collected, whereof

whereof the Clouds are form'd ; and how there should be such a mighty force in a Combination of 'em ; when apart considered, there is nothing weaker, or more inconsiderable than a Vapour, to which the Life of man is compar'd for its frailty. We know not how the liquid waters are changed into solid Ice, and hardned as a Rock, and then softned by the turn of the wind. It is all the work of God, *who made the Earth by his Power, establish'd the World by his Wisdom, and stretched out the Heavens by his Discretion.* *Who else is the Parent of the Rain ? Out of whose Womb came the Ice ? The Hoary frost of Heaven, who hath gendred it ? Hast thou entered into the Springs of the Sea ? Or walked in search of the Depth ? Have the Gates of Heaven been open to thee ? Hast thou perceived the breadth of the Earth ? Declare if thou knowest it all. Where is the way where Light dwells ? And as for Darkness, what is the place thereof ? Hast thou entred into the Treasures of Snow ? Or hast thou seen the Treasures of Hail ? &c.* Jer. x. 22.
Job xxxviii.

Who can distinctly explain the Formation and Expansion of the Clouds ? How they are ballanc'd and sustain'd in the Air, how they dilate and spread themselves, (much less how far they shall) what Commission they carry, where and when they shall unburden themselves ? &c. This is one of the works of him, *who is perfect in Knowledge, and infinite in Power.* So far are we from a full understanding of these things, that we know not *how our Cloaths do keep us warm, when God quiets the Earth with a South Wind.* The like secret influence of his Benediction is necessary to it, as to make our Food to nourish us. Job xxxviii.
15, 16, 17.

Moreover, what but a Divine Power can uphold the Clouds in the Air, when they are filled with Water ? 'Tis no less a wonder, (as one expresseth it,) than if you should see a Tun of Water contain'd within a Cobweb, as strongly as in a Vessel of Brass or Iron. The same Almighty Power maketh small the drops of Water, in the Clouds, that they pour down Rain according to the Vapour thereof. That the Clouds distill in gentle showres, and do not fall down all at once. The Original and Cause of these things is manifestly Divine: There is much in the nature of 'em past our Line to Fathom ; as being the Product of Infinite Power, and unsearchable Wisdom.

II. God is praised by *the wonderful Variety and Diversity* of these his works, in several Countries, and in our own; That the *Air* is sometimes more *dry*, and sometimes *moist*; sometimes *Calm*, at other times *Stormy*; That the *weather* is sometimes *clear*, sometimes *Cloudy*; sometimes *Warm*, at other times *Cold*: That in some months we have more *Rain*, in others more *Sun-shine*: That the *Winds* blow sometimes from this quarter, and sometimes from a different or Contrary one: Now more *gently*, at another time with more *violence*. 'Tis the work of *GOD*, and an instance of his *Wisdom* and *Goodness*, that as in some parts of the year the *Air* is stuf with *Clouds*, and the *Heavens* darken'd by the low descent of thick *Vapours*; in others, the *Sky* is serene and clear, like a *Molten Looking-glass*. At one time the *Earth* is cleft and broken into dust by the *Heat of Summer*; and then we find it covered with *Snow*, or harden'd like *Ice*, by the *Cold of Winter*: This *Variety* is not *casual*, but a *Divine Appointment*. Especially if we Consider,

III. *The Regular Succession of these VWorks of God in their proper seasons*. That after the darkness of every night, there is a *Resurrection of Light* every Morning; and that *Winter* and *Summer*, *Spring* and *Autumn*, *Seed-time* and *Harvest* do not cease, but duely observe their Turns. O Lord! Saith the *Plalmist*, *the Day is thine, and the Night also is thine*: Thou hast prepared the *Light* and the *Sun*: Thou hast made *Summer* and *Winter*, Thou renewest the *Face of the Earth*, every *Spring*. Praise ye the Lord! How manifest is the *Kindness* and *Wisdom* of God herein? That we might not be prejudic'd by too sudden a Passage from the Extremity of *Summer's Heat*, to the violent *Cold* in the depth of *Winter*; nor on the Contrary. And that the *Earth*, which hath been dried, and spent by the heat and fruit of the *Summer*, may be moistned, and cleans'd, and prepar'd by the *Winter* for a new *Fruitfulness* another Year. And after the widowhood and desolate Condition of the *Earth* in *Winter*, the *Spring* calls up the *Sap* and *Juice of Trees* into new *Leaves* and *Fruit*; and makes the *Plants* lift up their *Heads*, to provide new supplies of nourishment for *Man* and *Beast*. So *Wise* and *Good* is *GOD* to all his *Creatures*.

Psalms. lxxiv.
16, 17.
Pf. civ. 32.

Is not this an undeniable Argument of a most Wise, and Kind, and Almighty Being, by whom all things are thus established? To preserve the succession of Day and Night, Winter and Summer, by whirling about every day and year this massy Globe of *Earth*, or (which is more strange) *the Sun* and other Planets, with so unconceivably swift a Motion, as must long agoe have increas'd to an infinite excess, so as to shatter the whole frame in peices, if not govern'd by the Infinite Wisdom, and Power of God. So convincing is the Discovery of Glorious *Wisdom*, as well as *Power* in the disposing of these things, and in the regular succession of them; and so exact a Knowledge of Times and Seasons, Days and Years is thereby had, that the simplest *Idiot* in a Country can tell you, when the Sun is withdrawn from his Eyes at what time it will return, and by what degrees his Days and Nights shall either increase or Diminish; and what proportion of Time he shall have for his Labour in this season of the year, and what in that, without the least suspicion or Fear, that it should fall out otherwise.

Mr. Howe's
Living Tem-
ple. Chap. 3.

All this is by His Order and Constitution, *who worketh all things after the Counsel of his own Will*. Tho the degree of Heat or Cold, and the Quantity of Rain, which every Country, and every part of it shall have in one Year, and particularly the measure of Snow, and the Extremity or Duration of Frost, are directed with great Variety, according to his pleasure. Which brings me to Consider;

IV. That GOD is to be praised, and own'd, in the absolute Subjection of all these things to his Sovereign Will. He sendeth out his Word, he giveth forth his Orders, and the Frost and Snow either come or go at his Call; and where he sends them, they fulfill his Word. *He is King over all the Earth, sing Praises unto GOD our King. Sing Praises. His way is in the Whirlwind, and the Clouds are the Dust of his Feet.* As to us the wind bloweth where it listeth; we hear the sound, and feel the force of it, not knowing whence it comes, or whither it goes; but not a puff or breath of it can stir without his Direction. This is true of the Rain, and of all other Particulars. Can any among the Vanities of the Gentiles cause Rain? Or can the Heavens

Psalms xlvii.
6, 7.

Jer. xiv. 22.

of themselves *give Showres*? Art not thou he, O Lord our God? Can any of the *Monarchs*, and Mighty men of the Earth call for *Rain* in a time of Drought? Or can they turn the Bottles of Heaven another way, when there is too much? He withholdeth the waters, and they are dried up, he sendeth them forth, and they overflow the Earth. Canst thou lift up thy voice to the Clouds, (saith God to Job,) that abundance of Waters may cover thee? Canst thou send Lightnings, that they shall go, and say unto thee, Here we are? Who can number the Clouds in Wisdom? Or who can stay the Bottles of Heaven? When the Dust groweth into Hardness, and the Clods cleave fast together? To Command the winds, and to rule the waters, and limit the waves of the Sea, is one of those Glories of God, wherein men have not attempted to Rival him. Canutus the first of the Danish Kings of England, being at Southampton, (to convince and reprove his Flatterers, who cried up his Dominion and Power, as if he were Lord of Sea and Land,) commanded that his Chair of State should be set on the shore, when the Sea began to flow, and sitting down there in the presence of his many attendants, he commanded the Waters not to touch his Feet, or wet his Robes, but the Sea keeping its usual course of Tide, and not obeying him, he took that occasion to rebuke the foolish Flattery of his Followers, and manifest the weakness of Kings, in Comparison of Him, whom Heaven and Earth, and Air and Sea obey.

Sir R. Baker,
Milton, &c.

Such Dominion and Power is the Divine Prerogative: He can call for the Waters of the Sea, or stop them, and make a Path through the Ocean. He can command the Vapours in the Bowels of the Earth, or cause his Wind to enter there, and thereby shake the Foundations of a City or Country and swallow up the Inhabitants at once with their Habitations. He can raise a Wind, that shall make the Sea to break its banks, and cause terrible Inundations of Water, whereby Towns and Cities have been turned into Ponds, intire Provinces ruin'd, and whole Islands overwhelm'd, and swallow'd up, so as never more to appear. But the Waves can't pass one foot or inch beyond the limits of those Sands, wherewith he hath bounded the Sea. Tho it be upon a plain Level, the water shall spread no farther, which without the Efficacy of a Divine Order it would certainly

See Mr. Char-
nock of the
Power of
God, p. 452.

do; And the waves be no more stop'd by the Sand on the shore, than an enraged Army would retire upon the Opposition of a straw in the hand of an Infant. It is bridled by his Power from spreading it self over the whole Earth.

'Tis by the ordinary fixed Laws of the Creation, which GOD hath settled, (and we call the Course of Nature) that the Sea is continued within its bounds, that the Sun keeps his Sphere, and the Stars their order, and the VVinter succeeds the Summer; and the like causes produce the like effects every year in their proper seasons: God requiring that *Eccl. III. 15.* which is past, or calling back that which was driven away. There is a settled Rule in all these Changes, from which second Causes do not ordinarily vary; but GOD may, whenever he pleaseth, lengthen out the heat of Summer, and intend it, or sharpen the Frost in VVinter, and prolong it, in one Country, and one Year, more than in Another.

V. These works of God do Praise him by *the Excellent Uses and Purposes*, for which they are employed. They know not the order they observe, or the subordination they keep, or the Rule by which they act, or the ends they accomplish, or any of the Errands on which they are sent; but there is the Counsel of Heaven in forming, and using all of them. He maketh Vapours to ascend from the ends of the Earth; and all the Meteors of the Air to execute his will. He proportions the airy and watery parts together; He forms the Clouds, and then breaks one of those Heavenly Bottles to send down a refreshing showre on such or such a part of the Earth. His VVinds carry about the Clouds to remote places, in Summer and VVinter. These he holds in his hand, and lets 'em out in Weight and Measure to accomplish his Sovereign Pleasure; and when One Command is done, The VVind returns by its Circuit, to Execute Another. *Prov. xxx. 4. Eccles. I. 6.*

The Epicureans of Old, urg'd against the Belief of a Divine Providence, as unconceivable, and therefore incredible, That the Gods should be sufficient for such distracting and distracting Employments, as, according to the Exigencies of Nature's Works, to make the Sun shine in

one place, the Rain shewre down in another, the Winds to blow in a third, the Lightning to flash in a fourth, the Thunderbolts to fall in a fifth, and other Bodies to act and suffer according to their several Natures. All these we believe, on good Grounds, are really perform'd by GOD, with a Wisdom that reaches to the utmost Extent of the Universe.

Job xxxvii.
33.

All these Works proclaim the Wisdom, the Power, the Faithfulness, the Mercy, and sometimes the Justice of GOD, in the great Purposes they serve. He causeth them to come, *whether for Correction, or for his Land, or for Mercy*: i. e. either for the Punishment and Correction of a particular People or Person; or for *his Land*, (that which is not inhabited by Man, but by Inferior Creatures only, or rather) *the whole Earth*, which is *the Lord's*, and so must be understood of more general Judgments, such as *Noah's Deluge*, as yet fresh in memory when *Job* lived. Or *for Mercy*, and so especially they are used in every part of the World, and in every Age and Generation of Mankind. He can glorifie himself, and fulfil his Word, by using any of these Creatures not only for different, but contrary Services; sometimes to preserve, sometimes to destroy, sometimes to fulfil a Promise, and at another to execute a Threatning; So have Fire and Water, Clouds and Rain, Stormy Wind and Tempest, Frost and Snow, &c. been employed for Correction or Mercy, for Good or Hurt, to encourage, preserve, and reward Good Men; to terrifie, curb, and humble, or consume the Wicked.

Job xxxviii.
22, 23.

We read of *Treasures of Hail*, and *Treasures of Snow*, which God hath reserved against the Time of Trouble, against the Day of Battel, to punish a wicked People. We have several Instances in the *History of England*, of the great * Mischief hath been done by Extraordinary Snows, and a long continued Frost.

* Our Chronicles tell us, That in *Edward the Confessor's* Time, there fell such abundance of Snow in *January*, which continued till the middle of *March*; that almost all Cattle and Fowl perisht, and there was an Excessive Dearth followed. And that in *Henry IV.* his Reign, in his Ninth Year, the Frost and Snow continued all *December, January, February* and *March*:

So that almost all Small Birds died of Hunger. In the Reign of King Edward III. the Frost in England lasted Seven months, from the middle of September, to the month of April. And in Henry VIII's Time, in the 15th Year of his Reign, after great Rains and Winds, there followed so fore a Frost, that multitudes of people lost their Fingers, or Toes, or Nails, &c. In the 6th Year of K. James I. An. Dom. 1609. A Frost began in December, which lasted till April, that not only loaden Carts were driven over the Thames, but many Fowl and Fish perished, and much of the Herbage in Gardens. You Remember the Great Frost, 1683. when Coaches plied upon the Thames, and Thousands of Shops and Sheds were Raised upon the Ice.

And in such Winters, how many poor Families are reduc'd to the utmost Extremity, and very many, doubtless, starv'd to Death with Hunger and Cold? How easily can GOD impoverish, or destroy a City, Country, or Kingdom, by Frost and Snow? Or punish a People by Storms, Hail, Rain, Thunder, Lightning? 'Tis of these, that some understand that Passage in the Song of Deborah and Barak, *that the Stars in their Courses fought against Sisera*; Judg. V. 23. and the rather, because 'tis added, *that the River Kishon swept them away*. He can make the Heavens over us to be as Brass, and the Earth Iron: He can deny the former and latter Rain in their Season, or send too much: And by these, and many other such methods, turn a Fruitful Land into a Barren Desert, for the Iniquities of them who dwell therein. He can humble Merchants and Seamen by Stormy Winds and Tempests, sinking their Ships and Cargo, when return'd, after a prosperous Voyage, in sight of their Port. He can deprive Zebulon (the Mariner's Tribe) of the Harvest of the River, by blocking them up in their Havens by a long Frost. *He breaks the Ships of Tarshish with an East Wind*; and can scatter and destroy the most Formidable Armado, which was thought Invincible. Such things we have seen, and our Fathers have told us of the like in their Days, and in the Elder Times before them. *Praise ye the Lord*.

But by these Works of GOD, he doth usually dispense his Mercy, and express Kindness to the Children of Men. In some Countries, as in Lapland, not only doth the Snow abide all the Year on their Mountains, but during the whole Winter the Earth is covered with Snow. And considering that for some Months of VVinter, the Sun riseth not above their

their *Horizon*, or not much above it, this is rather an Advantage than an Inconvenience. For by the Light of the Snow they are enabled to work by Day, and to travel safely by † Night.

Neither may we over-look the Usefulness of the dissolved Snow on the Mountains, and other parts of the World, where the Ground is not manur'd by the Husbandman; not only that Birds and Beasts may receive some Benefit, but from thence is suppos'd the Rise and Original of many Springs and Rivers, which water the || Valleys, and are many ways serviceable to Mankind.

He whose Mercy is over all his Works, waters the great Garden of the Earth from the Bottles of the Clouds by Snow or Rain; and suits the Measure and Duration of both to the Necessity of the World, for the Maintenance of Man and Beast.

By the Wisdom of God, in those parts of the World which the Ancients thought to be parched up, and uninhabitable, there are Fruitful and Populous Kingdoms; by certain Winds that blow Regularly for a great part of the hottest Seasons of the Year; and by copious and lasting Rains that fall at set times; by the greatness of the Rivers which fail not at such certain times to overflow their Banks; and by Winds that in many places blow in the Night, from the Land Sea-ward, and in the Morning from the Sea towards Land; by these, and some other such things the Ground is moistned and refreshed, and the Air temper'd. And even in our own Climate, he fans the Air with his Wind, and cleanseth it by Rain and Thunder, that it may not be in-

† They can discern Pits, and Precipices, and Wild Beasts, by the Light of the Moon and Stars, reflected from the Snow; and can travel with such swiftness and convenience, that Two Rein Deer, in Winter, will draw a greater Load over the trodden Snow, than a Cart and Ten Horses can do in the Fields at other times, *Shefferius* Hist. of *Lapland*, chap. 3.

|| This is the Account given of the *Alpine* Springs, and the Four greatest Rivers in *Europe* that proceed from them, viz. the *Rhine*, the *Rhone*, the *Danube*, and the *Po*. See Mr. *Ray*, of the consequences of the Deluge, 8vo.

fectious He sends nipping *Frosts*, and bids the *Snow* to lye upon the Earth, for the good of the Corn, and the greater Fruitfulness of the next Summer. These are as necessary and Beautiful in their season, as the warm, pleasant beams of the Sun in another part of the year: For a constant uninterrupted course of warm weather and Sun-shine, would make the Earth fruitful only in Caterpillars and Vermine; would quickly produce a Pestilence, and Contagious Diseases, and be more proper to fill Graves than Barns. But the wise GOD directs and orders all these his works. Therefore *Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem! Praise thy G G D, O Sion! But,*

II. How the Consideration of these Wonderful works of GOD may be improv'd, and what acknowledgments we ought to pay to the great Lord and Governour of the world, and what Instruction of our Duty we may Collect from them, remains to be spoken to.

First, All men should most humbly Adore him, and Fear before him, and entertain, on the account of these things, most high and honourable Thoughts of the Blessed GOD. We are obliged, from the view of these his works, to acknowledge his Almighty Power, own his Sovereignty, reverence his unsearchable Wisdom, and sanctify his great and glorious Name. *He is God alone, and there is none beside him: The whole Earth is full of his Glory.* *Psalm lxxxix. 8.* Tho there may be further Excellencies of God, not express'd in this visible World, or in any Parts of it known to us: But in these are most unquestionable Discoveries of Infinite Power, and Adorable Wisdom.

Shall I need from hence to expose the Folly of Those, who granting the existence of GOD, deny his *Providence*, or confine it to the Heavens and the Celestial Bodies, allowing him no Concern at all for any thing here below, noregard to what happens on this side the Clouds? VVhen he hath made himself visible to every Eye, in all these his VVorks; not only his being in the Existence of all Creatures, but his *Wisdom* in their Frame, his *Power* in their Motion, and his *Goodness* in the useful Regulation and Disposal of them.

So

So great is the Number, so various the Kinds, so beautiful the Parts, so Regular the Subordination and Subserviency of one thing to another, and so admirably Wise and Good are the Ends and Uses for which they all serve, that we ought most humbly to Adore him, as *Creator and Lord* of all.

The Wonderful Order observ'd in these things, in all parts of the Universe, the Harmony and Concord of so many different Creatures for the Good of the whole, and the continuance of them for so many Ages, with such constant Changes, such just and well-ordered Revolutions, with a thousand other Particulars, are our continual Wonder, and which we can never Admire enough. And to consider them, and not acknowledge a Providence, is a less Extravagance, than to observe a *State* well-govern'd, a *Family* well ordered, or an *Army* under good Conduct and Discipline, and yet deny any Magistracy to Rule the State, or any body to look after the Family, or any General to command the Army.

Let not the Commonness of these things take off our Wonder. Let not the Constancy of seeing such Works of God every Year, stifle, or abate our humble Admiration of GOD, which is due on such a sight. The Things themselves deserve it, and our Relation to God, and our Near Concern in these his Works, will oblige us to it. Let us View them, not meerly to satisfy a Rational Curiosity, but to serve the Ends of Religion; to increase our Knowledge of GOD, and Veneration for him, and be instructed in our Duty: 'Tis to this End they are expos'd to our View; we are often admonish'd to regard them to this purpose, and 'tis to blemish the Divine Wisdom, not to consider 'em with this Design. *When I consider these things, saith Job, I am afraid of him.* ' Can I stand before this ' God, if he be Angry? when I cannot stand before his ' Heat or his Cold? How easily can he crush and destroy ' me in a Moment: How absolutely within his Reach ' and Power is my Life and Breath, and all that I possess? ' As is his Power, so is his Wrath; most Glorious Power, ' and therefore most Terrible Wrath! This made the Distress and Consternation of Job, when he apprehended the

Job XXIII.

15.

the Divine Displeasure, saying *God maketh my Heart soft, and* chap. xxxiii.
the Almighty troubleth me. As if he could no more bear up 24.

under the sense of his mighty Anger, than the Wax can
 forbear melting before the Fire. Accordingly in another
 place he expostulates with God, *Wilt thou break a Leaf driven*
to and fro? Wilt thou pursue the dry Stubble? A little Leaf chap. xlii. 25.

can as soon stand before a Tempestuous Wind, or dry stub-
 ble stop the Rage of a consuming Fire, as any man be able
 to resist the force of the Divine Power. If he be angry, he
 can make his Stars dart malignant Influences upon us: By
 his Lightning, like a glittering Arrow, he can pierce our
 Hearts: Showres of Vengeance may fall down upon our
 Heads from the Clouds: He can destroy us by Fire or VVa-
 ter, by Heat or Cold. His Earth may open and swal-
 low us up: His wind may be employed to plague us,
 and blow away such sinful Dust and Ashes. The mean-
 est Creature with his Commission is strong enough to
 do it. Let us humbly *Adore* and *Fear* him. Remembering
 that our Forgetfulness of G O D, and contempt of him is
 aggravated, by the repeated *Items*, and Intimations of him,
 which we have in every season of the Year. *For these* Job xxxvii.
things, saith Elihu, he is greatly to be feared. With him 22.
is Dominion, and Fear, and Terrible Majesty. Jer. v. 22.

'Tis observable, that after an Account of G O D'S
 stretching out the North-Pole over the empty spaces of the
 Air, and hanging this massy Earth upon nothing; (for
 the Earth is suspended in the Air, without any solid Basis to
 support it from falling,) after he had spoken of G O D'S
 binding up the VVaters in thick Clouds, and notwith-
 standing their Heaviness, the Clouds not rent by'em; and
 of his compassing the VVaters with bounds, and measu-
 ring a place for the Sea; and of his awakening and rebu-
 king the VVinds, &c. *All these, saith Job, are but part of his* Job xxvi. 14.
Ways. This is a little *Landskip* but of some few of his
 wonderful Works. These are little Crums and Frag-
 ments of the effects of his Power: Not so much as a small
 whisper to a loud Clap of Thunder: For it follows, *The*
Thunder of his Power who can understand? i. e. VVhen we
 have said, and thought all that we can utter or conceive
 of the Glory of God in these things, there is a further

Excellency and Glory, beyond our reach; There are Depths of Power, and Wisdom, and Kindness in these Works of God, which we do not fathom. The more we know of him, the more Reason shall we have to admire him, and to have higher and more Reverent Thoughts of him. The more we discover of him, the more we discern him to be Superiour to all his Works, and particularly to our selves, who are not of the highest Order of them; but have the Honour and Advantage of a Capacity, and Permission to know, admire, and adore GOD. The Contemplation of his Works will assist us to do so, and help to humble us under the sense of our imperfect Knowledge: whereby the most diligent and modest Enquirers into these things have hereupon profess'd their Ignorance, and they who have been more Confident, have betrayed Themselves.

'Tis certain, that they who by the assistance of a good Glass, have view'd any of these Common Works of God, do acknowledg an unexpressible Beauty, beyond what is discernable by the Naked * Eye.

But if we had the most piercing Eye, comprehensive Mind, and acute Judgment, to improve the Consideration of these wonderful Works of God, we have not liv'd long enough to make due Enquiries, and sufficiently to consider 'em. How soon are we puzzled to solve the Difficulties that arise from the most ordinary things. How easily may we be made sensible of our Ignorance, if we let our Thoughts loose, to mount up into the *Air*, or walk over the Surface of the *Earth*, or wade through the *Sea*, or intently apply our Minds to any One Work of God in either of these. There is not a *Morsel of Ice*, or a *Flake of Snow*, or a *Drop of Rain*, or a *Breath of Wind*, but is the Work

Job
XXXVIII.
ver. 21.

* One who hath been conversant to good purpose in such Enquiries, professeth, that he hath often with great Pleasure, observ'd such an infinite Variety of curiously figur'd *Snow*, that it would be as impossible to draw the figure and shape of every one of them, as to imitate exactly the curious and Geometrical Mechanism of Nature in any One. Mr. Hooke's *Micrographia*, Observ. XIV. Sect. 2.

of GOD, and hath Wonders in it beyond our * reach.

By an Enumeration of such Instances, GOD humbled Job, convinc'd him of his Sovereignty, and brought him to an adoring Submission. *Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my Mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further.* Such Depths in the Works of Nature should be considered to this end, to teach us to adore him, of whom are all things, and to whom are all things; to be still, and know that he is GOD; to acquiesce in his Government of the World; to submit to every Revelation he makes of himself, by his Word, or by his Providence: For why should we suppose there are no Depths and Mysteries in these, when there are so many in the Works of Nature? Why should we pretend to comprehend and fathom every thing, in what GOD speaks by his Word, when we find our selves nonplust about his most common and ordinary Works? His Wisdom is adorable in these things, and much more in his Providential Government of Men and Angels, and of all their Actions; even of the most voluntary and most crafty Actions of evil Men, and evil Spirits: But much more glorious is that, and other Divine Attributes in the Redemption of Mankind, and the Oeconomy of Man's Salvation by Jesus Christ. As to which, we may cry out with the Apostle, *O the Depth of the Riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his Judgments, and his ways past finding out!* Chap. XL.
Rom. X. 23.

* What shall we think of the Magnitude, Situation, and Motion of the Sun, and other heavenly Bodies? The fixed Stars, that appear to our Eyes like shining Spangles, are by Artists affirm'd to exceed each of 'em, above an hundred times the whole Globe of the Earth. And the Sun, which is granted to be some Millions of Miles nearer us than the other fix'd Stars, though it seem at this lesser Distance, not to be halt a foot broad, is by the generality of Mathematicians, believed to be above 100 and threescore times bigger than the Earth; and according to the later Calculation of some accurate modern Artists, 'tis estimat'd to be eight or ten thousand times as big as the *Terraqueous Globe*; and by further Observations may perhaps be found to be yet much vaster. See the Honourable Mr. Boyle, *Of the high Veneration Man's Intellect owes to God.* Octavo.

Secondly, All are hence to be minded of their Obligation to obey and serve Him. Every Creature else you see is directed by his Will, and answers to his Command ; and shall we gain-say the Orders of our Maker, which are duly observ'd by the whole Creation besides ? Shall we so far forget our selves, as to expostulate with him about what he enjoyns, or scruple his Right of Authority to command us ? Shall we so far forget the Example of our fellow-Creatures, as not readily to comply with his Pleasure, and yield dutiful Homage to his most wise and holy Will ? Shall Snow and Rain, Clouds and Meteors fulfil his Word, and shall we contradict, and refuse what he requires of us ? Shall Thunder and Lightning, and hoary Frost answer presently to his Call, and say, *here we are* ; and shall we boggle, and hesitate, and demur, whether we will do what he would have us, and go where he sends us, and be pleased with what he Appoints ?

Any little disturbance in the Common Course of Nature will sensibly affect us. If the Ordinary Laws of the Creation be transgress'd, or varied from, in the least Instance, we are startled, and amazed presently : While we do not Reflect, or lay to heart the Irregularity of our own Lives and Actions, which are a greater Blemish to the Beauty of the Universe. 'Twas by our Apostasie from God and Disobedience to him, that the *Earth was Cursed* ; and to this day the strength and Beauty of the Creation languisheth, and groans under that *Vanity*, to which it is subjected for the Sin of man. Let the Contemplation of all the Works of God, teach us ready obedience to his Sovereign Will. We have no *Pattern*, nor *Partners* of our Disobedience to it in the whole Creation on this side Hell. We must fetch the Instance from the Bottomless Pit, if we have any ; for God is readily obeyed by all his other Creatures, except the Devil and his Angels.

Thirdly, From what is seen of God in these things, we are encouraged to seek to him by *Prayer*, on all Occasions. Moderate or unreasonable Weather, a fruitful or a barren Year are at his Pleasure and Disposal. *He withholdeth Rain, when there are yet three Months unto Harvest*, and consequently

is most needed. He causeth *the Labour of the Olive to fail*, (or lye) so as to disappoint the Hopes of the Husbandman, by not performing what it promised. He can either bind up the Influences of Heaven, or make the Meteors of the Air to serve the Earth. Therefore *Seek him*, supplicate chap. v. 8. him by Prayer, saith the Prophet, *who maketh the Seven Stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of Death into the Morning: Who maketh the Day dark with Night*, (ordering the one to succeed the other,) *Who calleth for the Waters of the Sea, and poureth them out upon the Earth, Jehovah is his name.* The seven Stars, (or *Pleiades*) are mention'd with *Orion*, being the two famous Constellations, the one in the *West*, the other in the *East*; The one in the *Spring*, The other in the beginning of *Winter*: One attended with *Rain*, the other with storms and hard weather. These are ascribed to *GOD* as their Maker. And these are mention'd with two other Constellations, relating to the other two quarters of the year, viz. *Mazarothe* and *Arcturus*. Job. xxxviii. 31. 32. *Canst thou bind the sweet Influences of the Pleiades?* when they open the Earth, and cause the herbs, and flowers, and fruits to come forth; so as to keep back the Spring? Or on the other hand, *Canst thou lose the bands of Orion?* when the Earth is bound up by a Cold and Frosty Season, and stormy Winds; so as to keep off Winter? *Canst thou bring forth Mazarothe in his Season, Or canst thou guide Arcturus, with his Sons?* Is it by thy Power that the rest of the Stars, great and small, appear in the *Southern* and the *Northern* Signs, in their proper seasons. All the kind Influences of any of these is owing to God: Unto him we must pray, and unto him return thanks. It is his *Work*: He is not necessitated to bestow them, but doth it freely: And we have forfeited these Common Blessings and may justly be denied their Continuance. He expects to be acknowledg'd, and sought to, with reference to these things, and hath often own'd and rewarded Prayer, from others, besides the Prophet *Elijah*, who when the Famine was sore in *Samarita*, by prayer obtain'd Rain. 1 Kings. xviii. 41.

There is a considerable Passage in Ecclesiastical History to this Purpose, when *M. Aurelius Anton.* the Rom. Emperor An. C. 173. 00 war'd against the *Quadi*, a people in Germany, and his Army 174.

was

Euseb. *Cronic.*
and *Hist.* l. 5.
c. 5.

Tertull. *Apol.*
c. 5.

was reduc'd to great Extremity for want of Water ; besides that his Souldiers were many of them wounded, and wearied with Travel, and strained by a disadvantageous ground ; His Enemies were much more numerous, and assured themselves of a speedy and intire Victory, without striking a stroke. The *Prefect* in this Distress tells the *Emperour*, that the Christians (whereof one *Legion* called *Melitina* mostly Consisted, from an *Island* of that name, which had receiv'd the Gospel) could obtain any thing of their God by Prayer. Whereupon they fall on their Knees in the presence of their fellow Souldiers, and prayed in the name of Christ, and obtained refreshing showres from Heaven, and at the same time a dreadful Tempest with Thunder and Lightning, and Hail on their Enemies, which so terrified and discomfited the numerous Army, that they fled, and left their Baggage behind † them.

But the Influence of a serious Reflection on these works of God, will reach further with respect to Prayer, even in ordinary Cases from Year to Year. It will oblige us to acknowledge his hand in healthful, and seasonable Weather, to beg it of God from time to time, and to deprecate the long Continuance of violent Heat or Cold, as what would prove a Judgment. And therefore in a Frosty Season,

† This *Legion* was thence called *Fulminatrix*, or Thundering. The *Emperour* hereupon wrote a Letter to the *Senate*, and obtain'd an Honourable Edict in favour of the Christians, forbidding any to Accuse a *Christian*, for being such : This way was rather chosen, than to reflect upon the preceding *Emperors*, by revoking the Laws and Edicts, which they had made against the Christians. By this means it came to pass in the time of his successor, and Son, *Commodus*, that a Christian was beheaded at *Rome* for being a Christian, tho at the same time his Accuser had his legs broken for accusing him. *Xiphilin* and other *Pagan Historians* grant this Victory to be owing to the Christians Prayers, tho others of 'em would ascribe it to *Jupiter Pluvius*. And so it seems to be intimated, by what is engraven of the memory of this Passage upon *Antonine's Pillar* at *Rome* ; But that is not strange, considering the *Emperour* still continued an *Heathen*, and might therein comply with the Superstition of the People. The persecution against the Christians in this *Emperor's* Reign which some *Historians* have plac'd after this, viz. in the 17th year, may rather be suppos'd to have been in the 7th before this Passage. See *Wissii Aegyptiaca*. 4^o. p. 427.

we may well and lawfully pray, that God would please in his due time, to make the waters * gently to flow again.

Yea by these things we are encourag'd to pray on all other occasions: He that hath the *Treasures of Snow*, hath also *Treasures of Grace*, and an All-sufficient Fullness, to supply all our Wants. 'Tis the same God we must pray to for *Pardon* and *Sanctification*; and tho' our sins be as *Crimson* and *Scarlet*, he can make them as *Snow* or *Wool*.

Fourthly, We are hence encouraged to *Trust* in **G O D**. He who hath all Creatures in the Air, and Earth, and Sea at his Command, who by his Universal Presence, actuates all their Powers, and wisely directs all their Motions, and hath given proof of his steady Faithfulness, by continuing to do so every Year, in all Ages and Generations to this day; He is worthy of our Dependance and Trust, and may justly challenge it. He can do great things that we cannot comprehend, marvellous things without number. Who can disanul his Purpose? Or turn his hand, when he stretcheth it out? What can be a Difficulty to him, who made and maintaineth all things? Can we fall so low, that He cannot raise us? Or be reduc'd to such straits, wherein he cannot help? If we are distressed at *Sea* or *Land*, is not he Lord of both, and present every where? Can we stand in need of a stronger Arm, or deeper Wisdom, than is discovered in the Works of Nature, and daily Providence?

The *Jews* are called upon in this Psalm, to trust **G O D**, and own him in his Providential Dispensations, because the *numbring of the Stars*, and the Government of the Heavenly Bodies is ascribed to him, as well as the disposal of Frost and Snow, &c. He telleth the number of the Stars, he calleth them all by their Names, v. 4. The Stars of Heaven, they

* There is a great deal of Mercy in a gradual, gentle Thaw, after a long Frost. In the seventh Year of Queen Elizabeth, upon the sudden breaking of a great Frost, after the *Thames* had been frozen over, there were violent Inundations that did a great deal of Mischief in divers parts of the Land. The like at other times, and in other Countries.

Gen. xv. 5.

observe their Courses, and Influence the Earth, and notwithstanding the vast Magnitude and great Variety of 'em, and of their several Motions, they continue still to do so, because of his Ordinance and Appointment. These Stars which are so impossible to be numbred by us, that they are joyn'd with the Sand upon the Sea shoar, for multitude. they are not only numbred, but particularly known by Him: All their Powers, Qualities, and Influences, are created by his Word, (or an Expression of his Will) and are perfectly at his Command; the whole Host of them are so, as Soldiers at the direction of their General.

Can we believe this, and think the great Affairs of Mankind are excluded his Inspection and Care? Can we imagine he is an idle Spectator of the Revolutions of Kingdoms, and all the Changes that happen to publick Societies? The Advancement of Princes to a Throne, or their Removal? Which way soever it be brought about. either by themselves, or their Subjects, by a Civil, a Natural, or a Violent Death. Are not the Hearts and Lives of the greatest Personages in his Hand? Who can turn them as the Rivers of Water, as easily as he can dissolve the Snow or Ice.

We need fear no Enemies, or Dangers, if he be with us, and for us: For all Creatures obey him. If he Arise for our Help, all Enemies are scattered as Chaff before the Wind, and as a rolling thing before the Whirlwind. How powerfully can he save? How suddenly can he destroy? None of the Grandees of the World can stand before his Cold or Heat, or the least Creature armed with his Commission. The most inconsiderable of them are sometimes employ'd in mighty Works of Mercy or Judgment. Princes, and Popes, and Emperors have been devoured, and vast Armies discomfited, by such little Creatures, as Lice, and Mice, and Locusts, and a Troop of Flies. While we can hope for his Presence, in the discharge of our Duty, we may be confident that there is no threatening Danger he cannot prevent; No mischievous Design against us but he can defeat. And this sometimes by surprizing Arts, and Methods of Providence, so as to hide Those, whom he intends to preserve. I have read of one, who was pursued by bloody Persecutors to the House where he took shelter,
who

who crept into a Hole, over which a *Spider* quickly weav'd a *Cobweb*, and so when he was sought for, the place of his Concealment was not suspected: The *Hope* of the Hypocrite and Ungodly is compar'd to a *Spider's Web*, so weak a thing, so easily broken, and swept away; but the Divine Wisdom can make a little *Cobweb* as good a Defence and Preservative as the strongest Fortress, or a Munition of Rocks.

The good effect of Winter's Frost and Snow is perceiv'd the following Summer, and should encourage us to trust in God, for a good issue of the darkest and most severe Dispensations of Providence, which for the present have another Appearance. As when a *Gardner* is seen to pull up some delightful Flowers by the Roots; to dig up the Earth, and cover it with Dung, some ignorant Persons may be ready to charge him with spoiling the Garden; but when the Spring is arriv'd, there will be sufficient ground to acknowledge his Wisdom in what he did.

And some Assistance it may give us to believe, that the regular Hope and Trust of good Men shall not be disappointed by GOD, because he doth every Year so punctually satisfy the Expectation of the Heathen, yea, of the Beasts of the Field, and the Fowls of the Air, in the Succession of Day and Night, Summer and Winter. It may encourage us to look for Light after a time of Darkness; and a joyful Morning after a Night of Sorrow. There is an observable Vicissitude of Good and Evil, in the Affairs and Conditions of Mankind, and of the Church. It was so in the State of the *Jewish Church*, (and the like is true of other Kingdoms,) with respect to their several Kings and Princes. Things were bad enough in the time of *Saul*; of *David* and *Solomon* they were better: *Rehoboam* and *Abijah* bad; *Asa* and *Jehosaphat* good: *Joram* and *Joash* bad, *Uzziah* and *Jotham* good: *Ahaz* bad, *Hezekiah* good: *Manasseh* and *Ammon* bad again; *Josiah* good, and his Successors till the Captivity all bad: After the Captivity good, a little reviving. This is to be observed also in more private Instances, and is suited to our middle State in this World, between the perfect Joys of Heaven, and the unmixed Sorrows of Hell: And this is proper to prevent our Despondency

dency in a time of *Affliction*, as we should never be delivered; and to check our Pride and Confidence in *Prosperity*, as if our Mountain should never be mov'd. By this means we may be brought to own the hand of God in all our Comforts and Crosses, and to live a Life of Faith and Dependance on him, *Whose is the Day, and also the Night, and who maketh Winter and Summer.*

*Pf. CIV. 24,
and 34.*

Fifthly, Let the Inhabitants of *Sion* and *Jerusalem*, the People in a visible Relation to God, more especially *Praise him*. All the works of God do *Praise him objectively*, tho they know not themselves, and are incapable of Active, Intelligent Adoration and Praise; Therefore *his Saints do Bless him*. How pleasing was the Meditation of these works of God to the *Psalmist*, who thereupon breaks out into Joy and Praise. *The Earth is full of his Riches, all wait upon him; He opens his hand, and fills 'em with Good: He hides his Face, and they are troubled; if he take away their Breath they dye: He sends forth his Spirit and they are created, and renews the Face of the Earth. The Glory of the Lord shall endure for ever, the Lord shall Rejoice in his works.* Shall *Snow* and *Hail*, and *Frost* and *Ice* show forth the Praise of *G O D*, and shall not we extoll him? On this occasion the *Psalmist* summons the most Insensible Creatures, *Heavens, and Earth, Sea and Land, Snow and Vapours, Clouds and Hail, and all his Host*, to Praise the name of the Lord. He commanded, and they were Created: He made them, and he rules them: They bear some Impression of their maker: They punctually observe his Orders, and do his will: We will therefore *Praise the Lord*, for his Power, Wisdom, Goodness, Faithfulness, Sovereignty in all his works. Tho all the world should be silent, *Praise is Comely for the Upright.*

Palm cxlviii.

We are greatly concern'd to do so, considering that whatever good or kindness we receive, by any of these wonderful works of *G O D*, they are directed by his Providence, dispos'd to us by his Wise and Bountiful hand, and are dispens'd and given to us out of his Exchequer. If we want any of these blessings, which according to the Course of Nature, and the season of the year we may expect, how importunately do we Cry? And when we receive 'em duely, without

without Interruption, shall GOD be overlook't? Shall Distress and Trouble put us upon Prayer? And shall not Love and Gratitude to God awaken our Praises, when we receive 'em? We commonly and truly say, That *Atheists are not Thankful*, because they acknowledg not a GOD, from whom all their Mercies come. And is it not *Practical Atheism*, to neglect the *Sacrifice of Praise*, (which he will own and accept as a *Sacrifice*,) when every Year we largely partake of his Bounty in these things? Shall we give the Glory to *Second Causes*, which is due to the *First and Supreme Original*, and *Cause of all*? Ought we not to say, That 'tis of the Lord's Mercy, our Common Blessings are not blasted, and turned to a Curse? Ought we not to Praise him with the Voice of Thanksgiving, that in this Winter-Season we have Houses to shelter us, and Cloths and Fire to warm us, and Food to refresh us, and are Preserv'd in going out and returning home, and our bones not broken, (as is the Case of many,) by a sudden Slip or Fall? And Praise him we ought to do, by assisting and relieving the Poor, that they also may Rejoyce, and give thanks to God.

The Duty is ingeminated, *Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem! Praise thy God, O Sion!* It imports the most earnest desire of the Psalmist, that God should have his due; and the wretched Backwardness of our Hearts to the work of Praise, and that it ought to be continued and repeated. And it is so in *ps. ciii.* many Psalms, particularly in one. *Bless the Lord, O my Soul! And all that is within me, bless his holy Name! Bless the Lord, O my Soul! Bless the Lord, ye his Angels! Bless the Lord, all ye his Hosts! Bless the Lord, all ye his Works! Bless the Lord, O my Soul!*

But in this and all other Cases of Thanksgiving, we must remember the Order to be observ'd in Praise, as well as Prayer, to prefer spiritual Blessings in Heavenly things in Christ, before Temporal mercies. We bless God for our food and rayment, for our basket and store, for Protection and Provision, for the former and latter Rain, for the Showres of Heaven, and fruitful Seasons, for Frost and Snow and Winds and Clouds, &c. but above all, for Christ, and his Holy Gospel, and the Means and Hopes of Everlasting mercy. As to the former, Happy are the People that are
in

in such a Case, but unspeakably more Blessed are they, whose God is the Lord.

Lastly, Let us endeavour to make it manifest upon good grounds, that *this God is our God* in Covenant. Till by Repentance towards God, and Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and unfeigned Devotedness to him, we are interested in his Covenant-Favour, and can say, *This GOD is our GOD*: There is no Attribute or Work of GOD, no Discovery or Manifestation of himself in Nature or Providence but is matter of Terror to us. What a perplexing, confounding Thought must it be, to apprehend *this GOD*, who made and manages all things, to be *my Enemy*? Or not to know, that he is *my Friend*? How comfortable is it, on the other hand, to be able to consider, that the great Lord and Ruler of all this VWorld is *my Reconciled GOD, and Father*? That he who hath all Creatures at his Dispose is *my best Friend*? VWhat a Privilege is it to be Adopted into his Family? To be under his peculiar Care and Charge? To have an assured Expectation from him of all needful supply, for Life and Godliness, from his Covenant Love? VVith what Patience and Peace may we possess our Souls, in the most dark and difficult times? (Tho the Earth should be never so unquiet, the Foundations of it moved, and the Pillars thereof shaken) we may Rejoyce in the Lord, and wait for his salvation. *For Sion's GOD Reigns*; in whose hand are all the VWorks of Nature, all the motions of Providence, all the Events of Time, and all our Concerns for ETERNITY.

And if *now* he be so VVonderful in these ordinary works; and every VVinter, and every Summer we have so much reason to adore and praise him; How much greater VVonders of Glorious VVisdom, Power and Love, hath he prepared, and reserved in the upper, better VVorld, for his Friends and Children? If there be so much matter of Admiration now, by what is visible in the Inferiour Creatures of this Earth, with what ravishing Splendor will the Brightness of his Glory appear hereafter? VVhen the Veil shall be remov'd and our Capacities enlarg'd, & our souls admitted to behold him Face to Face, and know as we are known. Therefore for all we now see and know of GOD, or hope to do hereafter, (as the God of Nature, Grace, and Glory) Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem! Praise thy God, O Sion! F I N I S.

